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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: CHAD-SUDAN: GOC SHOULD "SEIZE THE MOMENT" TO PROFIT DIPLOMATICALLY FROM ITS MILITARY VICTORY

REF: A. NDJAMENA 185

1B. NDJAMENA 184

1C. NDJAMENA 175

This cable is sensitive but unclassified. Not for Internet dissemination.

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) Ambassador Nigro and DCM told GOC Ambassador to the U.S. Bechir May 22 that the GOC should "seize the moment" to exploit diplomatically its recent military successes. We acknowledged Bechir's expression of gratitude for the clear USG public position on the rebel attack and told him that Chad should build on SE Gration's recent visit to meet USG concerns by (1) reaching out to Chad rebels who might be newly responsive to this; (2) ending its military involvement with JEM; (3) continuing to exercise restraint in its military and diplomatic approach to Sudan; and (4) continuing to participate in multilateral and third-country mediation efforts to normalize Chad-Sudan relations. We urged a visit by FORMIN Faki to Washington soon, but cautioned that the success of that visit hinged on the GOC's ability to "deliver" on those USG priorities.

12. (SBU) Bechir, who is personally close to President Deby and has his ear on Chad-US relations, said that Chad continued to seek a "strategic bilateral partnership" with the USG, based on more than just "crisis management" of the Darfur crisis and its regional consequences. Bechir said that the GOC wanted a stronger USG presence in Chad, including a USAID mission and a Peace Corps mission; restored counter-terrorism cooperation; an AFRICOM a presence here, if one were desired; and access to PEPFAR and Millennium Challenge programs. Bechir argued for USG assistance in procuring C-130Js and an "official visit" to Washington for President Deby. Bechir said that Chad was preparing to hold credible elections, wanted to improve its human rights record and practices, including on child soldiers, and was open to renewed outreach to Chad rebels. Bechir claimed that the GOC had already ended its military support for JEM and supported an alliance between the JEM and SLA/AW in a Darfur "United Front," which could negotiate or impose a solution on Khartoum and become a "One-Darfur regional government." Bechir said that he continued have President Deby's green light to pursue an "alliance of convenience" between the GOC,

the SPLM/Government of South Sudan, and a Darfur "United Front" under joint JEM-SLA/AW leadership to negotiate with the GNU or impose upon the GNU a solution for Darfur and progress on the CPA. END SUMMARY.

CHAD-SUDAN

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador Nigro and DCM told GOC Ambassador to the U.S. Mahamoud Adam Bechir May 22 that the GOC should "seize the occasion" presented by its recent military victory over Chad rebels to turn it to Chad's diplomatic advantage. Ambassador Nigro emphasized to Bechir that the USG expected Chad to continue to use the utmost restraint and prudence vis--vis Sudan at this stage, both militarily and diplomatically. Chadian actions that could be perceived as raising tensions between Chad and Sudan would undercut Chad's moral high ground and encourage spurious Sudanese claims to have been "victimized" by a Western/Zionist conspiracy using Chad as its client and proxy. Chad should be particularly careful not to risk direct Chad-Sudan military confrontation, the Ambassador stressed. The Chadian military should attempt not/not to cross into Sudan in defense of Chadian security. If -- and only if -- doing so became necessary, Chad should observe strictly the rules of war governing "hot pursuit" and preemptive military action. Ambassador cautioned Bechir that Chad should treat its recent prisoners humanely, and work especially closely with UNICEF to safeguard and rehabilitate child-soldiers among rebel prisoners. Ambassador noted that Chad had been wise not to break relations with Sudan. As with escalation, Chadian action to break or downgrade bilateral relations would redound to Khartoum's credit.

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CHAD/JEM/HAD REBELS

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador recommended that the GOC act soon on its intention to send FORMIN Faki to DC as soon as possible. He underlined that Faki should be prepared to address USG as well as GOC concerns with senior officials there. The USG was very interested in hearing directly from Faki that the GOC had renounced military assistance to all Sudanese rebel groups, especially the JEM, and that the GOC would maintain political relationships with Sudanese movements chiefly to further a solution to the Darfur crisis. Ambassador said that we would also like to hear that the GOC was reaching out to Chad rebels in Sudan to reaffirm its commitment to Sirte Accord implementation as well as other less formal mechanisms to motivate rebels to renounce violence and return to Chad to engage in the political process. The GoC could designate an individual, e.g., National Mediator Abderahman Moussa, as a point of contact for returning Chadian rebels. We would appreciate assurances, continued the Ambassador, that the GOC would continue to seek diplomatic solutions to its problems by accepting valid multilateral and third-country mediation efforts to normalize Chad-Sudan relations.

CLOSER BILATERAL TIES

¶5. (SBU) Bechir told Ambassador Nigro that the GOC was enthusiastically happy with the clear USG statement that Sudanese-backed Chad rebels had carried out aggression against Chad. He indicated that he himself had lobbied hard for the GOC not/not to break relations with Sudan. Bechir said that Chad wanted a better and closer relationship with the USG and was prepared to address USG interests and goals in the region to this end. Among the things that Chad was prepared to offer was a "strategic" military-to-military partnership, including closer counter-terrorism cooperation and facilitating a presence for AFRICOM in Chad if desired.

FORMIN Faki might be able to travel to Washington in the June-July timeframe, said Bechir, perhaps carrying a white paper that would reaffirm the GOC's "open door policy" toward the Chadian rebels, on the basis of the Sirte Accords; that would state clearly that the GOC viewed the JEM as a political party and that it would not provide it with military assistance; and that would note Chad's willingness to accept a UN-associated surveillance arrangement for the Chad-Sudan border (assuming Libyan acquiescence).

¶ 6. (SBU) For its part, continued Bechir, Chad would like the United States to offer "strategically needed" C-130Js; access to the PEPFAR Program and Millennium Challenge, as well as Peace Corps deployments and a USAID mission; and an "official visit" to Washington for President Deby. The United States, for its part, could call on Chad to improve its human rights record, protection of children and practices with respect to child soldiers, and to engage in power-sharing with Chad rebels. The end result might be progress toward resolution of Chad's relations with Sudan, Chad's own internal problems, and Sudan's internal problems.

C-130Js

¶ 7. (SBU) Bechir urged Ambassador to carry out "DepSec Negroponte's decision" to sell Chad C-130J aircraft, which he insisted were needed for strategic reasons. He emphasized that other types of aircraft, including older refurbished C-130s, would not satisfy the GOC's sense of national pride and self-respect. We pointed out that Congressional approval of the sale was by no means certain; offered that we had hoped refurbished aircraft might represent a pragmatic way forward; and recalled that the IFI community doubted Chad's ability to pursue responsible public finance management should such a large purchase be made. Bechir reiterated that Chad was not/not interested in any alternatives to C-130Js.

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CHAD/JEM/SLA-AW

¶ 8. (SBU) Bechir claimed that the GOC had effectively ended its military support for JEM, partly because "JEM already has all the arms and equipment it needs." Bechir said that the GOC was actively encouraging JEM to ally with SLA/AW to represent "all of Darfur" vis-a-vis the GNU in Khartoum, as well as in negotiation and mediation efforts such as Doha. An alliance was needed because while JEM had the greater military strength, the SLA/AW represented the "majority" Fur and could not be ignored. Bechir theorized that an arrangement could be worked out in which the JEM's Khalil Ibrahim would serve as Darfur opposition Chief and Abdul Wahid as Deputy, with more senior positions overall for the SLA/AW in a Darfur "United Front," and perhaps one day as a "One-Darfur regional government."

BECHIR'S VISION

¶ 9. (SBU) Bechir explained that he was pursuing with President Deby's permission "his personal vision" of an "alliance of convenience" between the GOC, the SPLM/Government of South Sudan, and a Darfur "United Front" under joint JEM-SLA/AW leadership to negotiate with the GNU or impose upon the GNU -- "peacefully or otherwise" -- a solution on both Darfur and the CPA.

CHAD-ISRAEL RELATIONS?

¶10. (SBU) Bechir drew our attention to the text of FORMIN Faki's May 21 press availability, which contained standard GOC criticism of Sudan for having alienated Chad from the Arab and Muslim world. Bechir noted in particular Faki's denial of Sudanese claims that a conspiracy of Western nations and Israel had used Chad to target Khartoum for religious and ethnic reasons. Bechir offered that he was not personally against re-establishment of Chadian-Israeli relations, but he made clear that Libyan opposition to such a move had long prevented Chad from seriously considering the step. Bechir concluded that N'Djamena's establishing ties with Tel Aviv just now would only feed Sudanese propaganda machine.

COMMENT

¶11. (SBU) Bechir is personally close to President Deby and certainly has his ear on Chad-U.S. relations. He appears also to be playing a role on the South Sudan/SPLM account and Chad's relations with Sudanese rebels, as his assignment by Deby to accompany SE Gration and JEM notables to Doha indicates.

NIGRO